

History of Pioneer Cemeteries

Records of Gresham's early pioneers are few. For some, only a marker in one of Gresham's three early cemeteries, Pioneer, Escobar and White Birch, remains to tell of a life here. Other early histories have been reconstructed from diaries, early city records and oral narratives. We invite you to explore Gresham's early years as you tour our pioneer cemeteries.

Gresham Pioneer

Established in the early 1860's, the cemetery, which covers two acres on Walters Road, was originally a Donation Land Claim held by J. J. Moore in the 1850's. Henry Metzger purchased the land at a later date and donated the acreage for the cemetery and the Baptist Church.

White Birch

This half-acre site was originally a Donation Land Claim held by the Rev. Alfred Cornutt during the 1850's. Located on Walters Road across from Pioneer, the White Birch site was donated by Cornutt for a cemetery and the adjoining acreage was donated for the new Gresham School.

Escobar

This cemetery, located adjacent to Pioneer on Walters Road, was established in 1907. A half-acre in size, its two rows of plots run parallel to the railroad tracks.

In 1957, Multnomah County took over the care of Gresham's pioneer cemeteries.

Many varieties of trees and flowering shrubs have been planted at various times by surviving family members. Four Western Red Cedars mark the corners of one family's plot and Japanese Cedar, Ponderosa Pine, Douglas Fir, Cedar Deodar, Oregon Maple and Norwegian Spruce mark other burial plots. There are also lilacs, roses, and rhododendrons planted to honor family members.



Symbols

Headstone architecture and art represent the work of many artisans. Often they carved lambs, doves and flower buds on children's headstones. Sheaves of wheat are carved on the headstones of prominent citizens. Clasped hands on a marker mean "We shall meet again."

Civil War veterans' markers are in the shape of a shield bearing the state and company with which the men served.

Gresham's Early Pioneers

1. Johnson Cleveland 1819-1904

Four Western Red Cedars mark the corners of this family's plot.

2. Rev. David L. McLain 1837 -1921

A Civil War veteran, he was also a Baptist preacher in what was then Powell's Valley in 1882.

3. Sarah L. Metzger 1866-1898

Wife of Lewis C. Metzger, her marker is made of white bronze, which looks like stone.

4. Henry Kane 1844-1911

He traveled on an emigrant train to San Francisco in 1877, sailed from there to Portland, then settled in Powell's Valley.

5. Benjamin Franklin Rollins 1857-1931

A store owner, he named Gresham in 1884.

6. Andrew MacKinnon 1822-1886

Born in Argyleshire, Scotland, he was a sea captain, farmer, and teacher. He married Miyo Iwakoshi in 1879 and moved to the Orient area east of Powell's Valley where he was a co-owner of the Orient Steam Sawmill.

7. Miyo Iwakoshi 1852-1931

She moved to Powell's Valley in 1880 (with her husband and five-year-old daughter), becoming the first Japanese woman to settle in Oregon.

8. Metzger, Samuel 1838-1898

He owned a general store in 1888 and, later, the Gresham Hotel.

9. Ione McColl 1855-1934

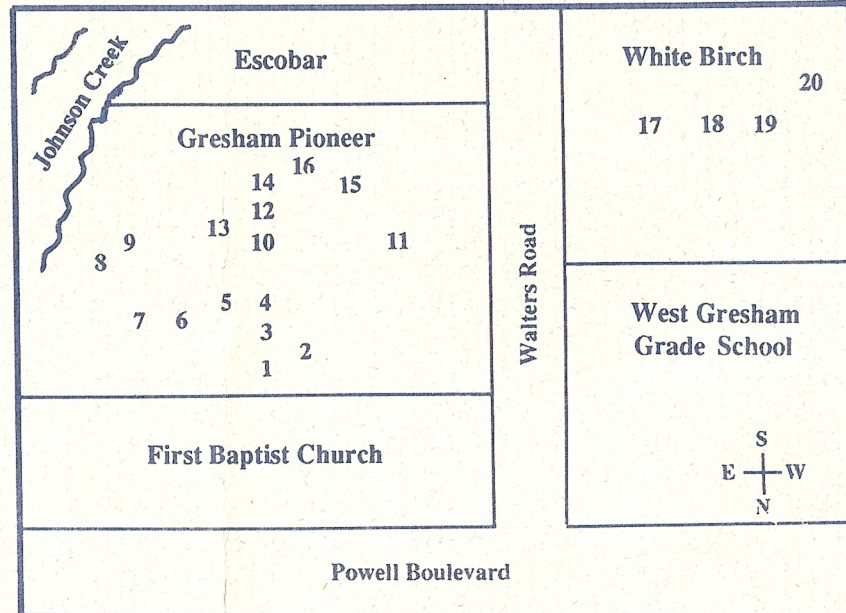
She served as Postmistress from 1898 to 1916 and donated 50 books for the first library, then called a "reading room."

10. Stephen Roberts 1824-1905

He served as a wagon master for a wagon train on the Oregon Trail in 1852.

11. Ernest Giese 1815-1891

Born in Hamburg, Germany, he sailed to the Isthmus of Panama and crossed it by mule, then sailed up the Pacific Coast and traveled to Powell's Valley where he farmed. Every two weeks, he walked to Portland where he worked in his tailor shop.



12. Adaline Duvall Powell 1826-1913

Wife of Dr. John Powell. He is credited by the American Medical Association for establishing the cause of cholera -- impure water, and the cure--boil the water.

13. Geroge T. Sleret 1830-1886

He and his family traveled over the Barlow Road in 1865. His daughter died on Mt. Hood's summit and lies buried in a pioneer cemetery in Summit Meadow. He later became a blacksmith on Powell Road.

14. Jackson Powell 1816-1890

He settled in Powell's Valley in 1848, farmed, and supplied trees to the Hudson Bay Post at Fort Vancouver by cutting and then floating the logs down the Columbia.

15. Thursy Cathey 1837-1888

At age 16, she married William G. Cathey, 21, and on their wedding day in 1853, they left Missouri for Oregon. An ox team pulled their wagon. At The Dalles, the couple sold nearly all their possessions to buy a crude scow to float down the Columbia to the Sandy River. They arrived penniless in Powell's Valley, their only possessions being what they could carry in their arms and pockets.

16. Rev. Thomas La Due 1832-1888

A circuit rider preacher, he held church services in Rock Creek, Damascus, and Powell's Valley, later Gresham.

17. Lena May Peirce 1890-92 (White Birch)

A little girl who lived for only "2 years and 4 mos."

18. Alexander Beers 1862-1921 (White Birch)

At birth, he weighed only 4-1/2 pounds, but grew to be 6'2" tall and to weigh 200 pounds. He founded Seattle Pacific College University and was a prestigious preacher and businessman who worked with the rich and the poor.

19. Ann Mary Spiller 1830-1898 (White Birch)

Born in Baden, Germany, she emigrated to America and traveled to Powell's Valley, later Gresham.

20. Komnra (White Birch)

Inscribed in Japanese, the headstone tells of a young man who died at age 28.

